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The Hassle-Free **GUIDE
TO A
BETTER
DIET**

The Hassle-Free GUIDE TO A BETTER DIET

U.S. Department of Agriculture

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This guide tells you the kinds and amounts of foods that make up a nutritious diet. But it lets you make choices to fit your eating style and needs.

The guide divides commonly eaten foods into five groups according to the nutritional contributions they make. By following the guide, you'll be able to choose foods for their vitamins, minerals, and protein — as well as calorie content.

Calories are a measure of the energy food provides. The extra calories that you get and

your body does not use up are stored as fat.

The suggested number of servings in the guide average about 1,200 calories, provide adequate protein, and supply most of the vitamins and minerals you need daily. Plan your day's food around this foundation to keep you on the right track to a better diet.

Remember, the guide gives you only the basics. You have to choose foods which meet your special needs. But you're usually better off by eating a wide assortment of foods from the first four food groups.

T H E · F I V E · F O O D · G R O U P S

VEGETABLE AND FRUIT GROUP

Vegetables and fruits contribute vitamins A and C and also fiber. Peels and edible seeds are especially rich in fiber. Dark-green and deep-yellow vegetables are good sources of vitamin A. Most dark-green vegetables, if not overcooked, are also reliable sources of vitamin C. So are melons, berries, tomatoes, and citrus fruits (oranges, grapefruit, tangerines, lemons, etc.). Dark-green vegetables, in addition, are valued for riboflavin, folacin, iron, and magnesium. Certain greens — collards, kale, mustard, turnip, and dandelion — provide calcium. Nearly all vegetables and fruits are low in fat, and none contain cholesterol.

BREAD AND CEREAL GROUP

Whole-grain and enriched breads and cereals are important

sources of B vitamins, iron, and protein. They are a major source of protein in vegetarian diets.

Whole-grain products contribute magnesium, folacin, and fiber, in addition.

Foods in the bread and cereal group include all products made with whole grains or enriched flour or meal.

MILK AND CHEESE GROUP

Milk and most milk products are calcium-rich foods. They contribute riboflavin, protein, and vitamins A, B₆, and B₁₂, too. Some of these products are fortified with vitamin D.

This group includes whole, skim, lowfat, evaporated, and nonfat dry milk, buttermilk, yogurt, ice cream, ice milk, cheese, cottage cheese, process cheese foods, and process cheese spreads.

MEAT, POULTRY, FISH, AND BEANS GROUP

These foods are valued for protein, phosphorus, iron, zinc, vitamin B₆, and still other vitamins and minerals. Included in this group are beef, veal, lamb, pork, poultry, fish, shellfish (shrimp, oysters, crabs, etc.), dry

beans, dry peas, soybeans, lentils, eggs, seeds, nuts, peanuts, and peanut butter.

It's a good idea to vary your choices in this group. Each food has a distinct nutritional advantage. Red meats are good sources of zinc. Liver and egg yolks are valuable sources of vitamin A.

Dry beans, peas, soybeans, and nuts are worthwhile sources of magnesium. All foods of animal origin contain vitamin B₁₂; foods of vegetable origin do not.

FATS, SWEETS, AND ALCOHOL GROUP

Most foods in this group provide relatively low levels of vitamins, minerals, and protein compared to calories. Vegetable oils generally do supply vitamin E and essential fatty acids. Butter and fortified margarines contribute vitamin A. Other foods in this group are mayonnaise and salad dressings; sugar, honey, syrups, candy, jams, jellies, sweet toppings, sugar-sweetened beverages, and other sweets; alcoholic beverages (wine, beer, liquor, etc.); and unenriched refined flour and baking products.





VEGETABLE FRUIT Group

1 SERVING IS:

½ CUP

A SMALL SALAD

A MEDIUM-SIZED POTATO

AN ORANGE

½ CANTALOUPE

½ GRAPEFRUIT

Have citrus fruit, melon, berries, or tomatoes daily and a dark-green or dark-yellow vegetable frequently. For a good source of fiber, eat unpeeled fruits and vegetables and fruits with edible seeds — berries or grapes.

BREAD CEREAL Group

1 SERVING IS:

1 SLICE BREAD

½ to ¾ CUP COOKED CEREAL OR PASTA

1 OUNCE READY-TO-EAT CEREAL

Choose whole-grain products often.



MILK CHEESE Group

SERVINGS:

Adults

2

Children under 9 years old

2-3

Children 9 to 12 years old

and Pregnant Women

3

Teens and Nursing Mothers

4

1 SERVING IS:

1 CUP MILK OR YOGURT

1½ OUNCES CHEDDAR OR SWISS CHEESE

2 OUNCES PROCESSED CHEESE FOOD

1½ CUPS ICE CREAM OR ICE MILK

2 CUPS COTTAGE CHEESE

Skim, nonfat, and lowfat milk and milk products provide calcium and keep fat intake down.



MEAT and Poultry Fish BEANS Group

½ SERVING IS:

1 to 1½ OUNCES LEAN, BONELESS,
COOKED MEAT, POULTRY, OR FISH

1 EGG

½ to ¾ CUP COOKED DRY BEANS, PEAS,
LENTILS, OR SOYBEANS

2 TABLESPOONS PEANUT BUTTER

¼ to ½ CUP NUTS, SESAME OR SUNFLOWER
SEEDS

Poultry and fish have less fat content
than red meats.



FATS SWEETS ALCOHOL Group

These foods provide calories but few
nutrients.

The Hassle-Free DAILY FOOD GUIDE



VEGETABLE FRUIT Group

1 SERVING IS:

½ CUP

A SMALL SALAD

A MEDIUM-SIZED POTATO

AN ORANGE

½ CANTALOUPE

½ GRAPEFRUIT

Have citrus fruit, melon, berries, or tomatoes daily and a dark-green or dark-yellow vegetable frequently. For a good source of fiber, eat unpeeled fruits and vegetables and fruits with edible seeds — berries or grapes.